

Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris

PERFORMANCE ON 42nd
and
IMMATERIAL INCORPORATED
present

Heap of Language: Robert Smithson and Poetry

Thursday, November 18, 1999 8-9:30 pm

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PROGRAM

Welcome: Debra Singer and Brian Conley

Opening Remarks and Moderator: Eugenie Tsai

Presentation: Gary Shapiro

Poetry Readings: Lytle Shaw, Pamela Lu, and Tan Lin

Presentation: Richard Sieburth

Question-and-Answer Session

Robert Smithson (1938-1973) is best known for his Earthworks - works of art that engage and transform the natural environment - such as *Spiral Jetty* (1970) in Utah's Great Salt Lake. Smithson, however, was also a prolific writer whose work has significantly influenced contemporary poetry. Drawing freely on history, science, philosophy, fiction, and poetry, his writings experimented with language as if it was just another artistic material and broke down distinctions between the poetic and the analytical.

This event was initiated by, and has been co-produced with, the art and culture organization Immaterial Incorporated. This program is offered in conjunction with Part II, 1950-2000, of THE AMERICAN CENTURY: ART & CULTURE 1900-2000, on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street, through February 13, 2000.

Program is subject to change. No unauthorized photography, audio-, or videotaping of the performance is permitted.

Whitney Museum of American Art
at Philip Morris
120 Park Avenue at 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Best known for his Earthworks, such as *Spiral Jetty* (1970), the late Robert Smithson was also a prolific writer whose work has significantly influenced contemporary poetry. Drawing freely on history, science, philosophy, fiction, and poetry, his writings experimented with language as if it were any other kind of material and broke down distinctions between the poetic and the analytical.

This event features readings by poets Tan Lin, Pamela Lu, and Lytle Shaw, whose work is in explicit or implicit dialogue with Smithson's sculpture and writing. In addition, Gary Shapiro (Department of Philosophy, University of Richmond, Virginia), Richard Sieburth (Departments of French and Comparative Literature, New York University), and Eugenie Tsai (senior curator for the Permanent Collection, Whitney Museum of American Art) will each make brief presentations that provide literary and philosophical context for Smithson's work, discuss the relation between his writing and his art, or respond to the readings by the three poets.

This event will take place at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris (120 Park Avenue at 42nd Street) and has been organized in collaboration with the nonprofit group Immaterial Incorporated. It is offered in conjunction with Part II, 1950-2000, of *THE AMERICAN CENTURY: ART & CULTURE 1900-2000*, on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art (945 Madison Avenue at 75th Street) through February 13, 2000.

The Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris is funded by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

Robert Smithson, *A Heap of Language*, 1966. Pencil on paper, 6 1/2 x 22 in. (16.5 x 55.9 cm).
The Over-Holland Collection
© Estate of Robert Smithson/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

IMMATERIAL INCORPORATED

Founded by co-directors **Brian Conley** and **Sina Najafi** in 1999, Immaterial Incorporated is a nonprofit art and cultural organization based in New York. In addition to organizing conferences, exhibitions, readings, and events, Immaterial produces interactive CD-ROMs focusing on cultural history and special digital art projects as well as CDs of sound art. Starting in April 2000, Immaterial will also publish a quarterly magazine of art and culture.

PARTICIPANTS

Tan Lin is a poet and critic living in New York. His books of poetry include *Lotion* *Bullwhip Giraffe* and *BOX* (Sun and Moon Press). Individual poems have also appeared in many journals, including *New American Writing* and *Conjunctions*. He received a Ph.D. in English literature from Columbia University and has taught at the University of Virginia. Currently, he is a Visiting Poet-in-Residence at the California School of Arts.

Pamela Lu is a writer and poet based in San Francisco who studied mathematics at the University of California, Berkeley. In addition to her non-fiction book, *Pamela: A Novel* (Atelos Press), her prose and poetry has been published in a number of journals, including *Chain*, *Chicago Review*, *Clamour*, *Explosive Magazine*, *Interlope*, *Mirage*, and *Poetics Journal*. Since 1995, she has worked as a technical writer in Silicon Valley and co-edited *Idiom*, an online journal and chapbook press.

Gary Shapiro has written extensively on the philosophy of art and on European philosophy of the last two centuries. His books include *Nietzschean Narratives* (Indiana University Press), *Alcyone: Nietzsche on Gifts, Noise, and Women* (SUNY Press) and *Earthwards: Robert Smithson and Art After Babel* (University of California Press). He is currently the Tucker-Boatwright Professor in the Humanities and professor of philosophy at the University of Richmond, Virginia.

Lytle Shaw lives and works in New York and is the co-editor of *Shark*, a journal of poetic and art writing. He studied architecture and literature at Cornell University and is presently completing a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, with a dissertation on Frank O'Hara. Author of two chapbooks and the book *Cable Factory 20* (Atelos Press), his poetry and essays have been published in several journals such as *Qui Parle*, *Poetics Journal*, *Explosive*, and *Chicago Review*.

Richard Sieburth is professor of French and comparative literature at New York University. He has published widely on Ezra Pound, including *Instigations: Ezra Pound and Remy de Gourmont* (Harvard University Press) and an edition of Pound's *Walking Tour in Southern France* (New Directions). In addition to scholarly publications on modern French, German, and American literature, he has published a volume of poems, *Weights and Measures* (Dijon), and has translated into English the work of Walter Benjamin, Michel Leiris, and Gerard de Nerval.

Eugenie Tsai is senior curator, permanent collection, at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where currently she is organizing a Robert Smithson retrospective. She curated *Lee Mingwei: Way Stations*, *Gazing Back: Shigeko Kubota and Mary Lucier*, and, for the Whitney Museum at Philip Morris, one-artist exhibitions by Ik-Joong Kang, Byron Kim, Christian Marclay, Shirin Neshat, Carrie Mae Weems, and Lynne Yamamoto. She is the author of the Choice Award-winning book *Robert Smithson Unearthed* (Columbia University Press).

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120 Park Avenue at 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
(917) 663-2453

PERFORMANCE ON 42nd is a program of the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, offering free music, dance, and theater performances to the public.

UPCOMING: Thursday, December 9, 1999, at 8 pm, Elliott Sharp and Orchestra Carbon premiere a new symphony titled *Radiolaria*.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Elizabeth Chaney *Lighting Designer*
James Lo *Sound Technician*
Kenyatta Hills *Production Assistant*
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WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART AT PHILIP MORRIS STAFF

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Debra Singer *Branch Curator, and Producer, PERFORMANCE ON 42nd*
Jeff Hopkins *Gallery Coordinator, Education*
Min Lee *Gallery Assistant, Exhibitions*

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